GUNNER DEPEW

By

ALBERT N. DEPEW

Ex-Gunner and Chief Petty Officer, U. S. Navy
Member of the Foreign Legion of France
Captain Gun Turret, French Battleship Cassard
Winner of the Croix de Guerre

CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

—16—

As we went ashore, the bombardment began, and we were not only under fire of spit, if you could call it that, but also of rocks and bottles and sticks and most anything that could be thrown.

All this time, "lest you forget," we had no shoes, and no clothing—only what had once been our underwear. It is all right to be a Coney Island snowbird and pose around in your bathing suit in the drifts, because you are in good condition, and last but not least, because you do not have to do it. Figure out the other side of it for yourself.

They marched us into a field where there was nothing much but guns and ammunition and snow, and set us up in something like skirmish formation. We stood there for some time, and then we saw a lot of Huns with the new long rifles coming toward us, yelling just as they did in battle, and we thought sure we were being used for practice targets. It is a good thing they halted and stopped yelling when they did, or we would have started for them to fight it out, for we were not the kind that likes to be butchered with hands in the air, and we would have been glad for a chance to get a few of them before they got us. But they did halt, and then surrounded us, and drilled us away through swamps and woods and shallow water or slush. The women followed, too, and there were plenty of bricks and spit left. Women as well as men are the same the world over, they say. I wonder? You can just picture the women of, say, Rockland, Me., following a crowd of German prisoners that way, can't you? Not! But of course the women of Rockland are pretty crude—no kultur at all—and Gott never commissioned President Wilson to take the lid off the strafe pot for him.

They drilled us along the docks, and it looked as though the whole German navy was tied up at Swinemunde. We saw many of the ships we had heard about, among them being the famous Vulcan, the mother-ship for submarines. There were many sailors loafing along the docks, and they gave the women a hand with their days' work. They were no better with a brick, but they had more ammunition when it came to spitting. One of them tripped a young boy by the name of Kelly, and as you would never doubt, Kelly picked up a rock and crashed the sailor with it. He was then bayoneted twice in the left leg. We began singing then, our popular favorite, "Pack up your troubles," etc., and when they heard us, how the swine stared!

Then they drilled us past the German soldiers' quarters. The men were at rifle practice, and I guess all of us thought how handy we would be as targets. But when we got near them, they quit practicing and crowded around us yelling: "'Raus! Zuruck!"

Finally we got to the top of the hill, and were halted near the barracks while an officer read the martial law of Germany to us. At least we thought maybe that was it.

Finally they let us into the barracks, and the first thing we saw was a great pile of hay. That looked good to us, and we made a rush and dived into it. But the Huns told us to take the hay and throw it in the middle of the road. They had to use force before we would do it. Finally we gave in, however, and started to carry it out. Some of the young boys were crying, and I do not blame them much.

But one of the boys tried to hide some of the hay behind a box and was caught doing it, and two sentries clouted him from one end of the barracks to the other. His nose was broken and his face mashed to a jelly. But there was nothing we could do, so we just wandered up and down the barracks, about as we did between decks on the Moewe, trying to keep warm.

While this marathon was on we heard a whistle blown very loudly, and when we looked out we saw a wagon piled up with old tin cans. Then we were told to form single file, walk out to the wagon and each get a can for himself. Each man had to take the first can he laid his hands on, and many of us got rusty ones with holes in them. So that about half an hour later, when we received barley coffee, and all we had to drink it from was the cans, lots of the men had to drink theirs almost in one gulp or lose half of it.

The barracks were very dirty and smelled horribly, and the men were still not even half clothed. We all looked filthy and smelled that way, and where the coal dust had rubbed off, we were very pale. And all of us were starved looking.

About eleven o'clock that morning the whistle blew again, and we came out and were given an aluminum spoon and a dish apiece. Then we cheered up and saw corned beef and cabbage for ourselves. An hour later they drilled us through the snow to the kuche. When we got there we stood in line until at least half-past twelve, and then the Germans shouted: "Nichts zu essen." But we did not know what that meant, so we just hung around there and waited. Then they started shouting, "Zuruck! Zuruck!" and drove us back to the barracks.

Later we heard the words "nichts zu essen!" so often that we thought probably they meant "no eats." We had our reasons for thinking so, too. Those words, and "zuruck" and "'raus," were practically all we did hear, except, of course, various kinds of schweinhunde.

It was awful to see the men when we got back to the barracks. Some of the boys from the Georgic, not much over twelve years old, were almost crazy, but even the older men were crying, many of them. It was nothing but torture all the time. They opened all the windows and doors in the barracks, and then we could not heat the room with our bodies. When we started to move around, to keep warm, they fired a few shots at us. I do not know whether they hit anyone or not; we had got so that we did not pay any attention to things like that. But it stopped us, and we had to stand still. The Huns thought we would take the rifles from the sentries and use them, too.

I never saw a yellower bunch of people in my life. I do not mean people. I wish I could publish what I really mean.

We had stoves in the barracks, but no coal or wood to burn. There were many boxes piled up there, but they belonged to the Germans. We would have burned them if we could, but the Germans made us carry them across the road. They weighed about 150 pounds apiece, and we were so weak that it was all two men could do to budge them. And we had to carry them; they would not let us roll them. We were so cold and hungry that even that exercise did not warm us.

About 2:30 the whistle blew again, and the Huns picked out a few men and took them down the road. We could not figure out why, but they came back about three o'clock, all of them with bread in their arms. They were chewing away on it when they had a chance. Whenever the sentries were not looking they would bite at it like a fish going after a worm. Each man carried five loaves.

When they got in the barracks the sentries made them put the bread down on the floor, and then, with their bayonets, the sentries cut each loaf once down the center lengthwise and four times across, which meant ten men to a loaf about the size of an

They Tied Me, Face to the Fence.

ordinary ten-cent loaf in this country now. They gave each of us a piece a little larger than a safety-match box.

The bread was hard and dark, and I really think they made it from trees. It had just exactly the same smell that the dirt around trees has.

We filed past the sentries single file to get our ration of this mud, and there was no chance of getting in line twice, for we had to keep on filing until we were out in the road, and stand there in the snow to eat it. We could not go back in the barracks until every man had been served.

Our meals were like this: A can of barley coffee in the morning; cabbage soup, so called, at noon; a tenth of a loaf of bread at 3 p. m. That was our menu day in and day out, the kaiser's birthday, Lincoln's, May day, or any other time.

This cabbage soup was a great idea. We called it shadow soup, because the boys claimed they made it by hanging a cabbage over a barrel of water and letting the shadow fall on the water. We pretended, too, that if you found any cabbage in it, you could take your dish back for a second helping. But I never saw anybody get more than one dishful. All it was, was just spoiled water.

We tried to go to sleep that night, but there were so many sentries around us—and those of us who were not sick were wounded—that I do not think a man of us really slept. After a while I asked a sentry if I could go outside for a minute, but for some reason he would not let me. I had different ideas about it, so I stood around near the door, and when he turned his back out I went and around the corner of the barracks.

But one of the sentries there saw me and blew his whistle, and a guard of eight came up from somewhere and grabbed me. I tried to explain, but it was no use, because every time I said a word it meant another swat over the ear, so finally I gave it up.

Then they drilled me across the road to the officers' quarters. There were three officers there, and each of them asked me questions about all kinds of things, but never once mentioned my running out of the barracks. Then they gave the sentries some commands, and four of the sentries took me out and over to the barbed wire fence. There they tied me, face to the fence, arms over my head, and hands and feet lashed to the wire, and with a rope around my waist, too. I thought, then, that my hunch had come true, and that I would be crucified, like Murray and Brown.

They posted a sentry there in addition to the regular guards, and every time he walked past me he would kick me or spit on me, or do both.

One time he kicked me so hard that a prong of the barbed wire gashed me over the left eye—the only one I can see with—and when the blood ran into my eye it blinded me. I thought both eyes were gone then, and I hoped they would shoot me. It seemed to me that I had got my share by this time without losing the other eye, and if it was gone, I wanted to go too.

I could not put up my hand to feel where the prong had jabbed me, and it kept on bleeding and smarting. I had on practically no clothing, you remember. The wounds in my thigh had opened, and it was bitter cold and windy. So you can picture to yourself how gay and carefree I was.

When I had been there for an hour and a half they untied me from the wire, and I keeled over on my back. They kicked me until I had to stand up, but I fell down again, and all the kicking in Germany could not have brought me to my feet. I was just all in. So they blew their whistles and the sentries in the barracks awakened two of the boys, who came and carried me in.

All the time the sentries were yelling, "Gott strafe England!" and "schweinhund!" until you would have thought they were in a battle. What their idea was I do not know.

The boys had a little water in a can, and one of them tore off part of the sleeve of his undershirt. So they washed the gash and bandaged it. Believe me, I was glad when I could see again. I was so tired and worn out that I went to sleep at once, and did not wake up until they were giving us our barley coffee next morning.

CHAPTER XIX.

German Prison Camps.

A few days after I had been lashed to the barbed wire fence some of the German officers came to the barracks, and one of them who spoke very good English said: "All of the neutrals who were on unarmed ships step out." Only a few stepped out.

Then he called for all the neutrals, and the Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Brazilians and Spaniards stepped out. But when I did, he said, "No, not Americans. Americans are not neutral. America supplies our enemies with food and ammunition." He raised his fist, and I thought he was going to hit me, but instead he gave me a shove that caused me to fall and get a little cut on the head. Then the sentries pushed me over with the British and the French.

After that they took the Norwegians, Swedes and Danes to separate barracks, and gave them clothes and beds and the same rations as the German soldiers. When I saw this I made a kick and said I was a neutral, too, and ought to get the same treatment as the Scandinavians. They took me to the officers again, kicked me about and swore at me, and the only answer I got was that America would suffer for all she had done for the allies. Then I was sent back to the barracks again.

The next day at about one o'clock they took us from the barracks and drilled us through the swamps. The men began to fall one by one, some crying or swearing, but most of them going along without a word. Those who went down were smashed in the head with rifle butts or belts.

Finally we arrived at a little railroad station, and had to stand in the snow for over an hour while the engine ran up and down the tracks hooking on cars. When we finally got in the cars we were frozen stiff. I could hardly walk, and some of the boys simply could not move without intense pain.

They loaded twelve men into each compartment, and detailed a guard of six men to each car. The windows in the cars were all smashed, and everything about the cars was dirty.

Finally the train stopped at a town named Alt-Damm, and there was a mob of women and children around, as usual, ready for us with bricks and spit. They stoned us through the car windows, and laughed and jeered at us, but by this time we were so used to it that we did not mind much. Only, every now and then some fellow would get all he could stand, and either talk back or make a pass at somebody. Then he would get his—either a bayonet through the arm or leg, or a crash on the head with a gun butt.

After an eighteen hour ride, without food or drink, we arrived at Neustrelitz. It was raining as we pulled in. As we went up the grade to the town we could see lights about a mile away, and we figured that that was the camp. The rain stopped and we remained in the cars for some time. Then, after a while, we knew our new guards were coming; long before we could see them, we could hear the racket they made. Somehow a German cannot do anything shipshape and neatly, but always has to have a lot of noise, and running around, and general confusion. Four-footed swine are more orderly in their habits than the Huns.

When they came up, we were rousted from the cars and drilled up the road to the camp. When we got near the German barracks we were halted and counted again, and made to stand there for at least an hour after they had finished counting us, shivering like leaves. At last they placed us in barracks, and those who could went to sleep.

There were about forty barracks in the Limey group at Neustrelitz and two large Zeppelin sheds. The barracks were just about like those at Swinemunde—at least, they were no better. Along the sides of the rooms were long shelves or benches, and every three feet were boards set in grooves. The shelves were what we had to sleep on, and the boards in the grooves divided them up so that only a certain number of men could use each bench.

The following morning we nearly dropped dead when the Huns pulled in a large wagon full of clothing. We thought we never would have anything to wear but our underclothes. They issued to each man a pair of trousers, thin model, a thin coat about like the seersucker coats some people wear in the summer, an overcoat about as warm as if it had been made of cigarette papers, a skull cap and a pair of shoes, which were a day's labor to carry around. Not one of us received socks, shirts or underwear.

The toe was cut from the right shoe of the pair I received, and as my wounds were in the right thigh and my leg had stiffened up considerably and got very sore, I got pretty anxious, because there was nothing but slush underfoot, and I was afraid I might lose my leg. So I thought that if I went to the commander and made a kick I might get a good shoe. I hesitated about it at first, but finally made up my mind and went to see him.

I told him that it was slushy outside, and that the water ran through the hole in my shoe and made it bad for my whole leg, which was wounded. He examined the shoe, and looked at the open toe for some time, and I thought he was going to put up an argument, but would give in finally.

Then he asked me what I wanted. I thought that was plain enough to see, but I said just as easily as I could that I wanted a shoe without a hole in the toe.

"So the water runs into it, does it?" he said. "Well, my advice to you is to get a knife, cut a hole in the heel and let the water out." All the other swine in the room laughed very loud at this, and I guess this Fritz thought he was a great comedian. But somehow or other, it did not strike me so funny that I just had to laugh, and I was able, after quite a struggle, to keep from even snickering. It was a harder struggle than that to keep from doing something else, though!

Our meals were just about the same as at Swinemunde—the bread was just as muddy, the barley coffee just as rank, and the soup just as cabbageless. The second morning after we had had our barley coffee, one of the sentries came to our barracks, which was number 7-B, and gave each of us an envelope and a sheet of writing paper. Then he told us to write to anybody we wanted to, after which he chalked on the door in big letters:

KRIEGSGEFANGENENLAGER

and told us it was the return address. We were all surprised, and asked each other where we were, because we had thought we were in Neustrelitz. After a while, we learned that it means "Prisoner-of-War-Camp." At first, though, many of us thought it was the name of the town, and we got to calling it the Brewery, because the name ended in lager. Whatever beer was brewed there was not for us though.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

LESSON FOR JANUARY 19

THE PASSOVER.

LESSON TEXT—Exodus 12:1-36.

GOLDEN TEXT—For even Christ our passover was sacrificed for us. I Corinthians 5:7.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL—Psalms 105: 36-38; Matthew 26:26-29; Hebrews 11:28.

I. The Passover Instituted (12:1-23).

1. The time set (v. 2). With the institution of the Passover came a change in the order of time. The common year was rolling on as usual, but with reference to his chosen people the order is interrupted and everything is made to date from this. This signifies that redemption is the first step in real life. "Old things have passed away, all things have become new." Before this the man was dead in trespass and sin; now he has arisen to walk in newness of life. All before redemption counts for naught. The world thinks that real life ends when one accepts Christ, but this is a grave mistake. It is the beginning of real life

2. The lamb set apart (v. 3). This previous setting apart of the lamb typifies the foreordination of Christ to be our Saviour. Redemption was not an afterthought of God (I Peter 1:18-20). This lamb must be a male without blemish, indicating that it must be both representative and perfect.

3. The lamb was killed by the whole congregation (v. 6). This shows that it was not for the individual only, but for the entire assembly. The setting apart of the lamb was not sufficient, it must be killed, for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." The lamb might have been tied to the door of the Israelites that night, but there would have been no salvation, notwithstanding its perfection. Had Christ's spotless life continued till the present time and his matchless teaching gone on without interruption, not a single soul would have been saved, for "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone." (John 12:24).

4. The blood of the slain lamb was to be placed upon the sideposts and lintels of the door (v. 7). It was not sprinkled upon the threshold, as it must not be trampled under foot (Hebrews 10:29). When the destroyer passed through the land he passed over the houses where the door posts were sprinkled with blood. This blood was the evidence that a substitute had been offered for them. They could rest absolutely secure, because the matter had been settled according to divine arrangement. The blood was the ground of peace. The assurance is not when you feel your sins are pardoned, but "when I see the blood I will pass over you."

5. Israel feeding upon the lamb (vv. 8-10). This denotes fellowship. Judgment must precede feasting. The eating of unleavened bread signifies that no sin is connected or allowed in fellowship with Christ. All who have entered into the power of the cross will put away sin.

6. They ate the passover ready for action (v. 11). The loins being girt about, betokens separation from sin and preparation and readiness for service. The feet being shod indicates their willingness to leave the land. The staff in the hand indicates their nature as pilgrims leaning upon a support outside of themselves. They were to leave behind them the place of death and darkness and march toward the promised land.

7. The uncircumcised denied participation in the feast (vv. 43-49). Circumcision was typical of regeneration. The significance of the requirement is that only those who have become new creatures by the power of the cross have a right to sit at the Passover feast.

II. The Significance of the Passover (12:24-28).

It was a memorial institution, calling to mind the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage—God's interposition on their behalf, freeing them from their oppression. This was to be taught to their children when they came into the land, from generation to generation.

III. The Awful Judgment (12:29, 30).

That night the destroyer passed through Egypt and slew the first born in every home where the blood was not found. An awful cry went up from Egypt that night.

IV. The Great Deliverance (12:31-36).

So mighty was this stroke that Pharaoh called for Moses in the night and requested him to be gone with his flocks and herds.

Inward Liberty.

No good action will hinder thee, if thou be inwardly free from inordinate affection. If thou intend and seek nothing else but the will of God and the good of thy neighbor, thou shalt thoroughly enjoy inward liberty.—Thomas a Kempis.

One Eternal Lesson.

The world is not a playground; it is a schoolroom. Life is not a holiday, but an education. And the one eternal lesson for us all is how better we can live.

Excessive Exercise.

"No," confessed Aunt Fretty, "my visit to Kansas City didn't do me the good I expected it to. My niece and the folks were real kind to me and did everything in the world that anybody could do to make me comfortable. But it seemed like I couldn't get rested at all, somehow. You see, they live on a pretty busy street and the house is right close up to the sidewalk, and, I guess likely, running to the window every time I heard somebody going by gave me more exercise than was really good for me."—Kansas City Star.

It is not always common sense that counts—sometimes it's the uncommon kind.